United Nations

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y  H I G H L I G H T S

- President of Russia informs United Nations that membership of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Security Council and other United Nations organs is being continued by Russian Federation.

- Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to leave New York for Yugoslavia tomorrow, 28 December; to meet with Lord Carrington and Foreign Ministers of Netherlands and Portugal in Lisbon on Monday.

- Secretary-General says he is "shocked and concerned" over situation in Somalia.

- Secretary-General expresses hope that German hostages will be released next week; negotiations on El Salvador to continue in New York.

- Morocco deplores document circulated at United Nations of behalf of African Group on the question of Western Sahara; says it is "a personal initiative" not authorized by African Group.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has been informed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin that the membership of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the United Nations, including the Security Council and all the other organs, is being continued by the Russian Federation (RSFSR) with the support of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Russian President further requested that the name "the Russian Federation" replace the name "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" in the United Nations. He said the Russian Federation maintained full responsibility for all the rights and obligations of the former Soviet Union under the United Nations Charter, including the financial obligations.

The statement was conveyed to the Secretary-General in a letter signed by President Yeltsin, dated 24 December.

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In a separate development, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said today that he was moved by President Mikhail Gorbachev's statement of resignation yesterday.

In a statement through his Spokesman the Secretary-General said that over the past six years, he had found in President Gorbachev a most staunch supporter of the United Nations and his own personal efforts for peace. He said President Gorbachev deserved great credit for policies that radically altered and improved the climate of international relations, adding that he had contributed considerably to the renaissance of the World Organization.

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The Secretary-General told the Security Council today, in a statement during informal consultations on the situation in Yugoslavia, that following a review of the situation with his successor, Boutros-Ghali, and his Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, he had requested Mr. Vance to undertake a fifth visit to Yugoslavia to see if the outstanding obstacles could be removed for the deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in the country. Accordingly, he said, Mr. Vance would leave New York tomorrow, 28 December.

While en route to Yugoslavia, Mr. Vance would confer in Lisbon with the incoming President of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, the Foreign Minister of Portugal; the outgoing President, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands; and with Lord Carrington, Chairman of the Conference on Yugoslavia.

In his statement to the Security Council, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that both he and his successor attached great importance to the role of the European Community and especially to the Conference on Yugoslavia which, he said, "is the only forum in which all the Yugoslav Republics have agreed to participate in peacefully seeking a long-term solution to their differences".

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The Secretary-General told correspondents this morning that he was hopeful that the two German hostages still in captivity in Lebanon might be released next week.

In reply to questions upon entering the building, he said the case was complicated because of, what he called, "legal intricacies" in this exchange.

Asked by correspondents to reflect on what he considered his major successes during his ten-year tenure, the Secretary-General cited the independence of Namibia, the end of the Iran-Iraq conflict, United Nations cooperation for the end of Iraq-Kuwait war, Central America and the end to the hostage situation. He added that the release of the hostages was "not a political undertaking", but a humanitarian one.

In reply to a question concerning the current negotiation in New York on El Salvador, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar said he thought there was an "important movement ahead". With five days left, he hoped that important progress could

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be made before the end of the year. The talks between the Salvadorian Governments and the representatives of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) have been going on in New York since 16 December.

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The Secretary-General has appealed to those involved in the fighting in Somalia to provide all possible assistance to enable relief operations to reach people in need and to ensure the security and protection of international and local relief workers.

In a statement made through his Spokesman today, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said he had asked a small team of international staff, initially made up of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) members, to return to the capital city of Mogadishu immediately to work with other relief agencies currently there. He said contingency plans had been made to expand the relief operations with more food and other supplies to affected populations as soon as the security situation permitted.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said he wished to reiterate his profound shock and concern over the current situation in Mogadishu where exacerbated factional fighting had "engulfed the city in a nightmare of violence and brutality to civilians". Up to 20,000 people, the majority of whom were women and children, had been killed or injured since the heavy fighting resumed on 17 November. Many thousands were fleeing the city and large numbers of displaced people were without access to food, medical supplies, shelter or water.

He urged all parties to respect the key principle governing United Nations emergency relief assistance, namely that such assistance was purely humanitarian in nature and had no political implications. He emphasized that the sole aim of the operation was to provide urgent assistance to victims of the conflict wherever they may be.

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Morocco has deplored the circulation of a document of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) authorized by the rotating Chairman of the Group of African States at the United Nations on the situation in Western Sahara, saying it was a personal initiative and never authorized by the African Group.

The letter in question, signed by Ambassador Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor of Ghana on behalf of the African Group and the OAU, urges that the Peace Plan for Western Sahara remain unchanged.

The Secretary-General had earlier proposed that certain elements be taken up in order to straighten out differences in the interpretation of the Settlement Plan, including identification of those eligible to vote in the future referendum.

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Morrocco said the letter was merely a personal initiative which did not in any way commit the members of the African Group. The letter did not reflect the view of the current OAU President, and the African Group had not convened either to discuss the content of the statement or to determine the appropriateness of such action on its behalf.

Morocco said that the letter would only undermine the efforts currently being made by the Secretary-General to bring about a definitive settlement of the question of Western Sahara.

Morocco's protest was contained in a letter, dated 24 December, addressed to the President of the Security Council and signed by its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ahmed Snoussi.

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